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PUBLIC STATEMENT OF ABBY JOHNSON

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MS. JOHNSON: My name is Abby Johnson, J-o-h-n-s-o-n.

I have a couple of comments to make as nuclear waste adviser to Eureka County and a couple of comments to make as Abby Johnson, citizen of Nevada.

I think I'll start out with the citizen comments. I have been involved in the nuclear waste issue since 1983, and on and off in the intervening years I have been involved because it's an issue that's challenging, complex, and so important to the future of the country and the future of Nevada.

I remember, and I don't remember what year it was, but in the mid '80s, I think at the time DOE did a series of environmental assessments going from the nine sites to five to three to one, I remember testifying in the Jot Travis Student Union in Reno, and the thing I remember from my testimony was saying that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. At the time I was saying that transportation was the weakest link.

I don't think that's really changed. Here we are in 1999, and we don't know that much more about transportation than we did in 1986 or '85. I think that's a real problem.

But I think in addition to that, there are some other links that are pretty darn weak, too. Back in 1985, it looked like Yucca Mountain was a great place if we could only get it there. And it was more important to have the great place than it was getting it there.

And now, it's still hard to get it there, and it still is very risky, and then you get it there, and it doesn't look so good either. It looks like there is a lot of risk being taken there, too.

The other personal comment is the need to pit rural people and urban people against each other, and to say we have to avoid Las Vegas, so the rurals need to take the impact. I think that it's an unfair, inequitable and unsafe proposition to do the roll of the dice, the risk analysis that says that the rurals have to take the risk because it's too unsafe for urban areas. We're all citizens here. We're all in the same boat.

And this EIS with its bounding analysis says let's look at what we can do to the urban area, and that's the worst thing we could do. The rurals are the backup position. And that's not right. It's wrong. And it shouldn't happen.

Now I have two comments as nuclear waste advisor. And this is a comment not on the DOE, it is to DOE, but it is not on the DEIS. It's a message that I hope by now you have heard clearly from this community and from this county. And that is that we have a lot of people that are very interested in this issue. They are hungry for information.

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And they come to me to get that information. I need to feed them information. And so the message that I would like you to take back is that, yes, at least in Eureka County, in Crescent Valley, there are people who are really concerned, who really care, who really want to know what's going on. And so as I tell all federal agencies, when you are scheduling meetings, it would be great if you could, federal government, talk to each other so that we do not have meeting conflicts.

Unfortunately, it was the Nuclear Regulatory Commission who yesterday scheduled a meeting on the modal study, already knowing that this meeting was being scheduled for today and that the Austin meeting was scheduled for Tuesday. We were not able to be represented at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's modal study meeting because we had to be here. And Department of Energy was on the calendar first.

There are other times when Department of Energy is on the calendar second, and I'm just saying, there's got to be enough days in the year so we can get to all of these meetings. |

The other comment I'd like to make I guess both as a person and as a nuclear waste advisor is that it has just been incredible to advise and help this group of people to be able to express themselves in these meetings, and I am so impressed with the quality of the comments, the depth of the comments, and the heart of the comments. So I just want to tell you what a privilege it's been to be involved in this process, which is of course not ending but is ongoing. Thank you.

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